

## The Rufford Foundation

### Final Report

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Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other format. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to [jane@rufford.org](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

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| Grant Recipient Details    |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Your name</b>           | Micol Montagna  |
| <b>Project title</b>       | TurtleWatch – Egypt: photo identification and citizen science based Red Sea turtle monitoring program in the Egyptian Red Sea |
| <b>RSG reference</b>       | 24787-1   |
| <b>Reporting period</b>    | 29-03-2018 / 28-03-2019   |
| <b>Amount of grant</b>     | £5000   |
| <b>Your email address</b>  | colmicol@gmail.com  |
| <b>Date of this report</b> | 28-03-2019  |

**1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.**

| Objective   | Not achieved | Partially achieved | Fully achieved | Comments  |
|---|--------------|--------------------|----------------|---|
| Better information on marine turtle biology and ecology in the Red Sea  |              |                    |                |   |
| Increased good practices when diving and snorkelling with marine turtles                                      |              |                    |                |   |
| Increased local awareness on marine turtle threats and positive behaviour while at the beach and in the water |              |                    |                | Objective successfully achieved with local guides, partially achieved with local schools. Hosting activities with children from local schools require a special permit from government which is difficult to get. Nevertheless, we have been able to work with local teachers and participated as guests in their activities. |

**2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).**

Organising activities with local public schools requires longer time than expected. A formal request for introducing the Turtlewatch material into the science public schools' curriculum is needed and the response from the Ministry of Education is taking longer time than expected. We decided then to start organising awareness events targeting local children with local NGOs (such as Roaya, based in El Quseir) and with private schools (such as the Smith Collins International School). That allowed us to organize workshops, lectures, practical activities in the field with children from El Quseir and Hurghada.

Fuel price increased by 35% in the last 15 months, therefore HEPCA could only support us for 6 months instead of the planned 12. This was also due to issues with HEPCA staff as the main project officer changed over time and the new one took a long absence leave for family reasons and was not replaced. Nevertheless, we were able to get help from local dive centres that provided transportation and logistic support (diving equipment, tanks, zodiac whenever needed) when we were conducting regular surveys at Hermes Bay or Marsa Abu Dabbab, two of the five index sites.

Due to increased costs for fuel and transportation, we had to cut expenses on other

items, like "food on the field", "t-shirts for trainers", "international flights" (see the breakdown of actual expenditure).

### **3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.**

1- Increased knowledge of marine turtle biology, ecology and threats in the Egyptian Red Sea: since we were awarded the grant

- 320 new individuals were identified (total of 400 individuals in our database).
- Four nests were reported and monitored along the Egyptian coast (nesting along the coast is a sporadic event but an important one to monitor due to limited nesting areas and overlapping with tourism developments).
- We could assess and monitor the injury rate of marine turtles in the wild and identify main causes of injuries (interaction with speedboats mainly).
- This information contributed to restrict the area where speed boats can move in Marsa Abu Dabbab, one of our major feeding grounds, to try to reduce collision with turtles. The area where speed boats are now allowed corresponds to the least used area by marine turtles according to the results of our 2018 regular surveys.
- We received reports of at least six dead hawksbill turtles, including two individuals possibly hunted for the illegal trade for carapace. Information on illegal hunting is scattered, however we know this is an important threat to marine turtles in the Red Sea, and therefore we are building a database to store and collect data systematically. We also got reports of marine turtles kept as pets in restaurants. With the help of the authorities, the turtles in the restaurants were released alive. The extent of these threats (illegal trade and pet market) in Egypt is largely unknown and it is important to register and monitor all events.

2- We effectively raised awareness about marine turtle's threats and shared best practice during our training and awareness events and we expanded our outreach thanks to the use of social networks.

- We trained over 130 dive centre staff including boat captains, dive guides, dive instructor, dive centre managers.
- We organised five awareness events addressed to foreign tourists (about 50 participants overall).
- Two workshops addressed to children from local schools (17 children and 13 teachers /educators / volunteers participated).

3- We successfully involved the local and foreign divers and snorkelers into the data collection.

- We received 1290 sightings from 97 different dive sites and involved 32 dive centres (and one organisation of professional photographers) and over 200 volunteer turtle-watchers.
- We ran 377 regular surveys at the index sites during which we could register 789 turtle sightings.

**4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project (if relevant).**

Dive centre local guides, dive instructors, support staff, boat captains, managers were broadly involved in the project: a total of 130 people attended our training and awareness events and afterwards they shared their knowledge with more staff and local and foreign tourists. They first learnt and then taught tourists and colleagues how to make a report, best practices while on boats, in the water, on the beach. They also successfully shared their sightings and pictures themselves.

Local dive centre staff were reached not only by our presentations and training events or by other colleagues, but many more were also reached thanks to the use of social networks (our Facebook page) and the distribution of flyers, posters, manuals. After the training everybody received a digital certificate of completion. We reached dive centre staff working and living in the following areas along the Red Sea coast: Dahab, Sharm el Sheikh, Hurghada, El Quseir, Marsa Alam, Wadi Gimal, Berenice.

In Marsa Alam area also beach staff, hotels and guest house staff, drivers and a few regular citizens have been introduced into the project. Some hotels/restaurants/guest houses are also supporting the project: they present it to their guests/customers and they hang the TurtleWatch Egypt poster in their facilities.

We also worked at awareness programmes addressed to young Egyptians. We prepared ad hoc lectures, talks, games, activities and material in cooperation with a local NGO, educators and a private school.

We took part in a 3-day workshop organised by Roaya (local NGO based in El Quseir): TurtleWatch - Egypt team lead the "Turtle Day", an event with special focus on marine turtles and the threats they face. Several activities including an in – water "TurtleWatching" tour introduced ten kids and ten adult local volunteers/teachers into the marine conservation field.

A 2-day workshop was also organised in collaboration with the Smith Collins International School of Hurghada. Seven kids and three teachers attended the activities. We prepared lectures on marine turtle biology and ecology and on pollution and the threats marine turtles face during their life. We prepared also games, quizzes and interactive activities to integrate the theory part. What the kids learnt during this workshop has been included in the school's Science curriculum.

**5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

The project during the first year had a very positive feedback and shed light on several aspects which are worth being further developed.

1. More dive centre professionals can be involved and participate in further training, in order to achieve a broader group of potential sighting reporters, gather more data to extend our knowledge of marine turtles in their feeding

grounds in the Egyptian Red Sea and identify new important areas for sea turtles. At the same time further training will help us share awareness with more staff and tourists. Egypt is pushing hard for mass tourism, so we are expecting to have more tourists and more staff getting in the water very soon.

2. During the past 12 months, seven injured turtles were reported or found and monitored. In most of those cases the reason of the injury appeared to be a collision with speedboats that occurred in major turtle feeding grounds. Those spots are also highly touristic areas where snorkelers and divers go to swim, scuba dive or take a trip by speedboat. New sessions of extensive training events, this time specifically addressed to boat captains and guides need to be organised in order to reduce mortality or injury rate of marine turtles due to collision with speedboats, as well it is important to improve management of important areas for marine turtles.
3. Although small groups of children have been involved so far (due to the long time required to arrange activities with public schools), we had received a surprisingly positive feedback from the kids who participated in our awareness events. We believe that it would be very useful to continue those kind of activities addressed to young Egyptians.

At the same time regular surveys at the index sites and monitoring of injured individuals (whenever possible) should be conducted by the TWE team.

## **6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?**

We have shared the results of our work with the project partners, with monthly updates; we have shared all news about the project on our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/turtlewatchegypt/>) which is also used by citizen scientists to reach us out and to share their sightings with us (we have got over 1850 Facebook followers at the moment).

We have been contacted by various foreign and local organizations/ Universities/ magazine journalists who cited the project whenever appropriate in their work through interviews and articles.

A short note on recovery rates of marine turtles in the wild we have been working on recently is going to be submitted soon to a peer-reviewed journal (Chelonian Conservation and Biology).

Furthermore, we are currently working on a TurtleWatch - Egypt web site to extend our outreach.

## **7. Timescale: Over what period was The Rufford Foundation grant used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?**

We followed the scheduled plan and we used the grant for 12 months.

**8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.**

| Item   | Budgeted Amount | Actual Amount | Difference | Comments  |
|--|-----------------|---------------|------------|---|
| Partial salary (essential subsistence compensation) for Local field Assistant              | 1200            | 1200          |            |   |
| Rental of room for trainings   | 140             | 40            | -100       | HEPCA and dive centres helped and contributed in organizing the training venues   |
| T-shirts for trainers  | 50              |               | -50        | We did not make them, we preferred to spend this amount for material for awareness events   |
| Printed material for trainings   | 280             | 500           | +220       | We produced not only manuals, but posters and flyers as well  |
| Food for coordinator and assistant while in the field                                      | 600             | 400           | -200       | We cut on those expenses to give priority to transportation expenses.   |
| Accommodation for field coordinator while on the field                                     | 1080            | 1080          |            |   |
| Internal travels (fuel, car rental) for regular surveys + nests/injured turtles monitoring | 650             | 951           | -301       | 1-Fuel costs rose of the 35% during the last 15 months (in June 2018, prices increased starting from July 2018)<br>2-HEPCA car was available for 6 months on the 12 estimated but we could rely on the support of local dive centres that provided transportation and logistic support in several occasions |
| International flights (2 foreign researchers x 1 trip per year)                            | 1000            | 500           | -500       | We decided to cover the flight expenses of one researcher only to give priority to regular surveys expenses   |
| Expenses for media communication (internet use and phone)<br>*not in the original          |                 | 100           | +100       | Internet and phone costs –to widen our project outreach through social networks/emails  |

|   |             |             |      |  |
|---|-------------|-------------|------|--|
| <u>budget</u>   |             |             |      |  |
| Internal transportation for training and awareness events (planning meeting and training events themselves)<br><u>*not in the original budget</u> |             | 179         | +179 | Rental of cars/ taxi drivers were required to make arrangements, meetings and to reach the training event locations in Hurghada and Marsa Alam areas |
| Material for awareness events for children<br><u>*not in the original budget</u>  |             | 50          | +50  | Games, printed material such as quizzes and banners  |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>5000</b> | <b>5000</b> |      | Exchange rate in 01-2018: 1 GBP = 23.93 EGP / in 03-2019 1 GBP = 22.79 EGP   |

#### 9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

- Reduce mortality and injury rate of marine turtles in their feeding grounds due to collisions with speedboats through implementing training programmes for boat captains and through extensive awareness programmes for dive centres on how to avoid injuring marine wildlife.
- Improve management of important areas for marine turtles through the preparation of detailed management and action plans for four areas, in collaboration with the EEAA which has the power to actually implement the management measures.
- Extend our knowledge of marine turtles in their feeding grounds in the Egyptian Red Sea and identify new important areas for sea turtles by increasing the number of people reporting data through a series of trainings for dive centres and their guests.

#### 10. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did The Rufford Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes, we used The Rufford Foundation logo in all flyers, posters, manuals, certificates for training, PowerPoint presentations, and part of the material for educational program (the turtle-memory cards).

We create frequent posts on our Facebook page and The Rufford Foundation is always tagged.

We prepared a short note to be submitted to the Chelonian Conservation and Biology peer-reviewed journal and The Rufford Foundation is acknowledged.

The Rufford Foundation is listed in our web site (to be completed) as a sponsor and the logo is present on the site in the “collaborators” section.

**11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.**

**Micol Montagna**, marine biologist – Field and data coordinator, trainer.

**Dr. Agnese Mancini**, marine biologist – Scientific coordinator and data analyst, trainer.

**Abdallah Rabia Taher**, PADI MSDT - Field coordinator (assisted on the field, during training and replaced Ms Montagna whenever needed). Technical adviser for in-water activities, responsible for all communications in the Arabic language.

**Dennis Lisbjerg**, marine biologist – President of the DZS. Adviser, helping creating the project website and the first version of the TWE 2.0 catalogue.

**Amgad El Shaffai**, marine biologist – current Regional manager of HEPCA. Adviser, provided logistic support during part of the regular surveys at index sites.

**Ahmed Fouad**, PADI OWSI – previous Regional manager of HEPCA. Provided logistic support during the dive centre staff training sessions.

We had various volunteers joining the field coordinator during one or more surveys and volunteers who helped during the activities with local children.

Local NGO Roaya cooperated with us for the educational events, as well as the Smith Collins International School of Hurghada.

The resident marine biologist of Gorgonia Resort (Wadi el Gimal area), Miriam Tercon and the resident marine biologist of Lahami Bay resort (Berenice area), Alessandro Ferlazzo Ciano gave a remarkable additional support to the project as they helped monitor the Hotels' house reefs and get recreational divers and snorkelers involved.

We have implemented this project with the following partners:

Extra Divers Equinox dive centre, HEPCA, DZS, Idea Wild

**12. Any other comments?**

TurtleWatch - Egypt team would like to sincerely thank The Rufford Foundation that made possible all what has been done during the last 12 months.

We'd like to thank also all volunteers, collaborators and Extra Divers, Ducks Diving Superior and Blue Ocean dive centres for the continued logistic support during our regular surveys.

